veral Books Planned on Ray Case; First to Be Out Next Week

By MARTIN WALDRON

Special to The New York Times

MEMPHIS, March 12—"Next to cotton, James Earl Ray is Memphis's biggest industry," Percy Foreman said last fall after he succeeded Arthur J. Hanes as Ray's lawyer.

Mr. Foreman, who said he was promised no fee for defending Ray on a murder charge in the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., at the time also scorned what he referred to as the "pandering press" and its curiosity about Ray.

Books in Preparation

The chief target of the Houston lawyer's scorn seemed to be William Bradford Huie, the Alabama author who had bought the rights to Ray's life story and was getting handwritten memorandums from Ray in the Shelby County jail. Mr. Huie had written two articles about Ray for Look magazine.

This week, at least five books on James Earl Ray and the assassination of Dr. King were in preparation.

And Mr. Foreman had succeeded Mr. Hanes, of Birmingham, Ala., not only as Ray's attorney but also as a business associate of Mr. Huie.

One of the books on Ray and the assassination is ready for printing and distribution. It was written by Clay Blair, former editor of the Saturday Evening Post.

Other Authors

Bantam Books said that Mr. Blair's book, "The Strange Case of James Earl Ray," would be published next Monday or Tuesday. It will be a history of Ray and of the murder, with a chapter on the courtroom proceeding of last Monday when Ray pleaded guilty to murdering Dr. King and was sentenced to 99 years in prison.

Other authors preparing books include Gerold Frank, who has written six best-sellers, among them "The Boston Strangler"; George McMillan of Atlanta; James Squires, a Nashville newspaperman; and Mr. Huie.

Mr. Frank's book may be the most comprehensive. With reported advance of $100,000, the New York writer plans to spend two years researching and writing his book for Doubleday & Co., Inc.

There other authors have expressed opinions as to whether Dr. King's murder was the result of a conspiracy, Mr. Frank said that he was trying to get more evidence before making a decision.

'History of Ineptitude'

"I hope my book will be a full history of the assassination of Martin Luther King and what happened on all levels. And if there was a conspiracy, I hope to know that. I will try to tell the entire unfolding story," Mr. Frank said.

"From Ray's history of ineptitude," he said, "I would assume that he was helped in the assassination or preceding it, but that it was not necessarily a conspiracy."

"If we knew the true motivation, it might well explode any idea of conspiracy," he continued. "On the other hand, you cannot apply the normal measures of logic to a man who has spent most of his life behind bars. If he did this alone, he may have been turned on for reasons lost in the depth of his own personality."

Doubts a Conspiracy

Mr. Frank, who began his research last July, said that he had not paid any money to any of the principals or to anyone else for information.

Mr. McMillan said that his book, "Portrait of an Assassin," would be a psychological study of Ray. It will be published by Little Brown & Co. Mr. McMillan said that he had a "very happy contract" and that foreign reprint contracts had already been signed by publishers in eight countries.

"I have always believed that James Earl Ray did it alone," he said. "This guy is a loner. And I have never investigated any aspect of a conspiracy, which has left me free to work on this biography."

Mr. McMillan said that he had hired a psychiatrist to help him interpret the psychological effect on Ray of his many years in prison, his background of poverty and his family life. "Things like, what does it do to a guy to sleep in the same bed with his parents when he is growing up," he said.

Mr. McMillan said his book was to have been published four months after the end of Ray's trial. The date may be pushed forward, he said.

Mr. Squires's book, to be published by New American Library, may be the second book out on Ray. Mr. Squires, who has covered the case for his newspaper, The Nashville Tennessean, said the writing should be completed in the next two weeks.

He said he hoped the book would be a "complete account of the murder of Dr. King, the arrest of Ray, the hiring and firing of Hanes and what went on in Memphis."

The book has not yet been titled.

Mr. Huie, who bought the publication rights to Ray's life story last July, originally had signed a contract calling for proceeds from a book to be split between himself, Mr. Hanes and Ray.

Disbelieves Theory

He paid an advance of $25,000 to Ray, who signed the money over to Mr. Hanes as part of his legal fee.

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Callahan
Conrad
Felt
Gale
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Sullivan
Tavel
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Gandy

The Washington Post
Times Herald
The Washington Daily News
The Evening Star (Washington)
The Sunday Star (Washington)
Daily News (New York)
Sunday News (New York)
New York Post
The New York Times 23
The Sun (Baltimore)
The Daily World
The New Leader
The Wall Street Journal
The National Observer
People's World
Examiner (Washington)

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ENCLOSURE

Mr. Huie, a resident of Hartselle, Ala., who is the author of a half-dozen best-sellers, wrote in the two articles for Look magazine last fall that Ray said there had been a conspiracy to murder Dr. King.

However, Mr. Huie said in Memphis this week that he no longer believed in the conspiracy theory.

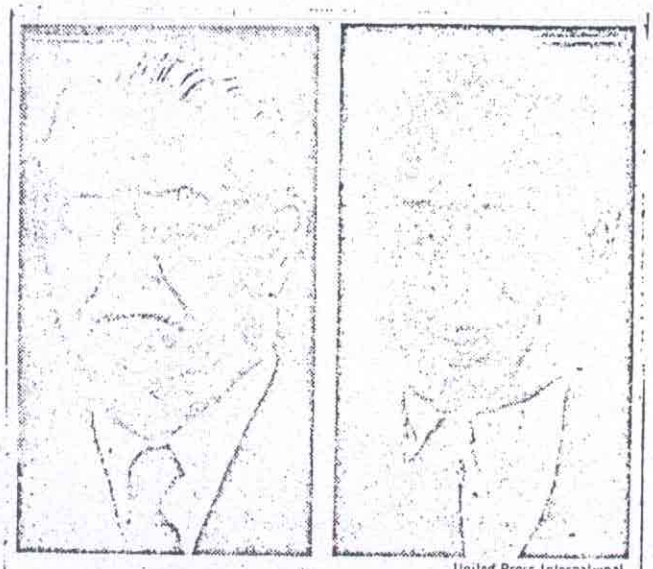
Mr. Huie said that Ray had told him that the assassin went into a rooming house and shot at Dr. King across the street while Ray was seated in front of the rooming house in the driver's seat of a white Mustang car.

The author quoted Ray as saying that the assassin rushed down the stairs of the rooming house and hid on the floor of the back seat of the car, covering himself with a sheet while Ray drove him out of town.

"When I could not find the man, I concluded that Ray himself made the decision to kill Dr. King," Mr. Huie said.

A third article for Look was prepared this week by Mr. Huie and Mr. Foreman. In addition, Mr. Huie is completing a book on Dr. King's assassination for the Dell Publishing Company. The book, which will concentrate on activities of Ray before and after the murder, has been tentatively titled, "He Slew the Dreamer."

Although Mr. Hanes still has a claim against a portion of the proceeds from the sale of Mr. Huie's book, the Alabama author told reporters in Memphis this week that he had a contract with Mr. Foreman.



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Percy Foreman — William Bradford Huie